

# News Release

## *Midwest Natural Resources Group*

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### **Unique Federal Partnership Combines Resources to Improve the Midwest Environment**

*Fourteen Federal Agencies Agree to  
Focus Their Efforts on 13 Areas of the Midwest*

In an unparalleled move, 14 federal agencies with 14 distinct purposes have formed the Midwest Natural Resources Group (MNRG). Comprised of senior agency executives, the MNRG is joining forces to focus on the health and vitality of natural resources in the Midwest. The participants include regional executives of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Energy, Federal Highway Administration, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Office of Surface Mining, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S.D.A. Forest Service and the U.S. Geological Survey.

According to David Ullrich, deputy administrator, Region 5 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and former chair of the MNRG, "Executives from the various agencies realized the need for discussion on common conservation issues. While many issues are dealt with on an inter-agency basis by agency staff, the MNRG is unique in that it is comprised of regional executives who have the authority to focus their agency's resources in specific areas."

"The MNRG's recently formalized charter and focus area approach to natural resource management provides clear direction for the agencies to work together and use their separate federal authorities and missions to benefit the Midwest," said Ullrich.

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US Army Corps  
of Engineers



As outlined in the charter, the purpose of the MNRG is to coordinate, identify, and enhance the accomplishments of existing efforts being undertaken by federal and non-federal partners, including states, tribes and local governments; explore, and commit to, new opportunities for cooperation and collaboration; achieve better reporting procedures to Congress and the public regarding federal progress and results within the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA); and better utilize limited resources to reap maximum benefits for the natural resources and people of the Midwest.

The MNRG works in conjunction with more than 100 natural resource professionals, who represent all 14 agencies, throughout the Midwest. They manage on-the-ground research and work, enhance partnerships, build teams, and develop project recommendations and progress reports for the MNRG. Information and recommendations from these agency experts are then used to develop resource priorities for specific, on-the-ground, projects.

“There is a lot of excitement among MNRG members as executives from the agencies highest levels begin to focus on areas of mutual interest, solve problems, and do what is best for natural resources, and ultimately the people of the Midwest,” MNRG Chair and Region 3 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director Bill Hartwig said. “We realize that much cooperation already exists at the staff levels. We are not looking to start over at square one, but we realize that we need to involve all the stakeholders in a cooperative process and determine the best role for each agency or bureau in each of the focus areas.”

The 13 Midwest “Focus Areas,” each of which fall within either the Great Lakes or Big Rivers basins, include: Big Rivers basin — the Illinois River, Minnesota River, Missouri River, Ohio River, Ozark Plateau, St. Croix River and Upper Mississippi River. Great Lakes basin — the Detroit River/St. Clair River, Fox River/Green Bay, Great Lakes (general), Saginaw River and Bay, Southern Lake Erie and Southern Lake Michigan. These “Focus Areas” encompass the 12 Midwestern states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

“An important element of the MNRG’s cooperative process will be its involvement of the region’s state and tribal governments, local communities, and others interested in natural resource management. We (MNRG) understand that we can’t do it all ourselves,” Hartwig said. “The local communities, states, and tribal governments are in the best position to get things accomplished. The role of the Midwest Natural Resources Group is to ask our partners where we — as a group of federal conservation agencies — can help them within our federal missions. It’s not a ‘big government’ approach to conservation, but rather a unified, ‘one-government’ approach, which is what we believe the American people want.”

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